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# **Multiculturalism, interculturalism, ‘multiculture’ and super-diversity: Of zombies, shadows and other ways of being**

## **Introduction**

Whether as a zombie, a shadow or more simply ignored, for many multiculturalism in Britain has become something of a pariah term. This is so both for its picture of the social world in Britain as well as a political and theoretical response to addressing inequalities within it. Three corners this can be seen to come from are: interculturalism, ‘everyday’ multiculturalism or ‘multiculture’<sup>i</sup>, and super-diversity. This article directly engages the critiques found in these areas. This is done firstly by mapping out the grounds on which they challenge multiculturalism. It also offers a direct conceptual critique to these positions. This is done with reflection on the concepts of identity, difference and recognition. To this end, the final section of the paper considers a newer and different challenge to multiculturalism, that of ‘liberative difference’. Overall, this article argues that the challenges to be discussed in the following not only do not offer a convincing alternative framework or conceptual apparatus to multiculturalism when it comes to thinking about identity and difference, but that they would actually impoverish these concerns. The focus and thrust of this paper is to scrutinize these perspectives as they relate to multiculturalism and to each other, and it is this that orients the paper. Core features of multiculturalism, and given my focus on Britain I have in mind that of Parekh and Modood, will emerge out the discussion as they relate to the literature under consideration.

## **Multiculturalism: The spectral zombie**

Ulrich Beck first raised the contention that multiculturalism had become a *zombie* category; that being a ‘concept without observations’ it was the ‘living dead’ (Beck, 2002: 24). That is, it had become disconnected from how diversity is lived and is therefore lagging behind contemporary social reality. More worryingly, that as a result, if it continues to be employed, it will (continue to) have deleterious social effects. In assessing alternative frameworks that would either explicitly or implicitly share this view of multiculturalism, it will in fact be a recurring claim of this article that the supposed zombie of multiculturalism may well be a zombie, but is not multiculturalism.

While interculturalism, everyday multiculturalism and super-diversity are distinct, there are considerable overlaps. It is these overlaps, some explicit and some implicit, that suggest the fruitfulness and relevance of bringing them together in the way done here. Something important they all share is a focus and primary concern with the quotidian aspects of what they would call a ‘lived’ multiculturalism, which means that macro- level multiculturalism at best needs to be ignored in preference of a micro-level approach, and at worst needs to be replaced wholesale and forthwith. Stemming from this, two central ways in which these differentiate themselves from multiculturalism are through their approaches to identity and difference, emphasising a plurality of many and fluid identities, and an emphasis on contact and contact zones, in which identities are transformed.

Despite these significant cross overs, there are important differences also. Most importantly they start from quite different assumptions with regards to their central concept of ‘contact’. For interculturalism (Cantle, 2012, 2015) such contact

must be fostered as multiculturalism is viewed to have created ‘parallel lives’. For everyday multiculturalism such contact already exists and it is this that forms the basis of multiculturalism’s irrelevance to a more complex and unstable, empirical reality than it does and can account for. Because of this important difference the first section below will consider interculturalism separately<sup>ii</sup>. The following sections will then go on to consider the everyday and super-diversity together, and point to conceptual overlaps with interculturalism. A final section then brings into the conversation a more recent challenge relevant to thinking about identity and difference.

### **Interculturalism and community cohesion: the ghost hunters**

Just as there are a number of multiculturalisms, so too there are a number of different interculturalisms, which can differ from each other quite considerably<sup>iii</sup>. Given my focus on the context of Britain, the interculturalism under consideration here is that developed by Ted Cantle following the publication of what became known as the Cantle report (Cantle, 2001; see also 2005) after the 2001 urban riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford.. This model is positioned to offer a direct and explicit theoretical and normative challenge to multiculturalism. It is claimed to be superior to and a replacement for multiculturalism models by prominent authors such as Modood and Parekh. Cantle’s interculturalism has become the dominant conception engaged in this debate in Britain and in this context the most widely influential challenge in the academic literature as well as in governmental public policy initiatives. The Cantle report highlighted what it termed ‘parallel lives’, arguing that high levels of segregation between communities underlay social problems. For interculturalism, it was multiculturalism policies and a lack of willingness on the part of minorities to

integrate that resulted in this separation, and that consequently led to the violence. For Cantle, multiculturalism was no longer fit for purpose, being unable to respond to the context of the super-diversity of contemporary British society (Cantle, 2012: 88; see also 2015). The country, indeed the world, had changed to an extent that at best rendered multiculturalism unnecessary, and at worst meant it was a dangerous policy agenda, which had resulted in a 'plural monoculturalism'.

The first issue is the foundational premise on which interculturalism was based, namely 'the finding of "parallel lives"' (Cantle, 2014: 313). The 'parallel lives' thesis is theoretically shallow firstly because even if we accept the thesis as empirical reality, this can never be *actual* parallel lives. If they are parallel, they are so in a relational manner. If we start from the understanding that isolation is a relation, then we are forced, if we are to produce any account whatsoever, to account for this betweenness of isolation in historical context as a starting point. This point notwithstanding, the empirical reality itself of this separation has in fact been well contested (see Jivraj and Simpson, 2015; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Phillips, 2006; Singh, 2004; Thomas and Sanderson, 2012; Werbner, 2002). These studies highlight the neglect of economic and structural factors in explaining the riots. This provides a very different perspective on what the community cohesion agenda saw as patterns of self-segregation where both the agency of minorities and policies of multiculturalism were blamed for parallel lives. There is also a question about whether, or at the very least where and when, such separation is in fact the problem that interculturalism assumes it is (Wessendorf, 2013). What these critiques share and highlight is that interculturalism and community cohesion ignore structural patterns of racism and inequality and their dynamics.

### *Interculturalism and identity*

A fundamental concern for multiculturalism on the whole is issues of identity. Indeed, on this issue, Cantle states that ‘the key difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism generally revolves around the way in which personal and collective identities are conceptualised and instrumentalised’ (Cantle, 2016: 140).

Interculturalism engages and is critical of two aspects of multiculturalism’s approach to identity issues. It is, firstly, deeply sceptical about the idea of national identity, and secondly, of a form of identity politics which, it holds, reifies categorical singularities against empirical multiplicities. Cantle charges the methodological nationalism of multiculturalism as being out-of-date and not able to provide a more cosmopolitan basis for identity and solidarity (2012; see also 2015). A national approach, as Cantle sees it, can only speak at ‘the blandest and therefore almost meaningless level’ (2012: 22). Echoing Beck, Cantle argues that identities in this way remain ‘fixed and given, rather than transitory and chosen – they are fundamentally about past heritage, rather than future personal and collective development’ (2012: 30; see also Beck, 2002: 27).

These assertions about a future-forward orientation at the expense of the past are, however, problematic. This apparent identity-neutrality is conceptually rather shallow as it is ahistorical and apolitical. This is also evident, for example, in the palpably bland remarks of postwar migration ‘building upon established cultural links’ (Cantle, 2014: 313), managing in just five words the remarkable feat of expunging colonial history and the racialized and culturalized development of a British national identity (see Bhabra, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Hampshire, 2005; Karatani, 2003; Panayi, 2010). This is a far cry from the challenge asked by the report of the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain to recognize the complexity of history in

order to recognize how minorities have been and continue to be excluded in important ways (CMEB, 2000). This is especially relevant when we consider that it was under Empire in which cosmopolitanism for Britain was first formulated (Vietan, 2007, cited in Yuval-Davis, 2011: 150). This of course is structurally relevant to the setting of the present context from which a shared future is to be built. That is, that if a shared and inclusive future is to be worked towards, it needs a mutually reinforcing appreciation of connected histories, otherwise it is impossible to see how such structural forces can be understood adequately. Moreover, attention to cosmopolitanism's own history and context recognizes that such discourses are not a kind of 'freedom from belonging', but are themselves 'a special sort of belonging, [not] a view from nowhere or everywhere rather than from particular social spaces' (Calhoun, 2003: 532).

Fundamentally, after all, what multiculturalism is about is citizenship. This is both in a more formal sense of social justice and equality through legislation and policies to address structural forms of discrimination, as well as a more imagined sense of who and what belongs. Bypassing the nation-state fails to account for its continuing dominance as the political unit in which citizenship is both realized and contested (see, for example, Kymlicka, 2015, 2016) and the complex ways in which they 'still matter' (Calhoun, 2007). Yuval-Davis, herself no fan of a methodological nationalism, concedes 'the nation-state [is] the major tool of governance, [so] in spite of the many changes and limitations on its power under globalization... is the continuous crucial importance of state citizenship as a political project of belonging' (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 49). Werbner has in fact found that far from necessarily undermining the national, transnational activities and connections may actually help empower minorities and help achieve civic integration and civic consciousness both

in their ethnic community and ‘as citizens of the nation’ (Werbner, 2000). It may be that the problem is the older, essentialized notion of ‘nation’ as ‘a people’. Antonsich, makes the argument that the rush to get beyond the national has confused post-national with post-territorial, resulting in a false binary. Furthermore, that what is bounded is still important to investigate because place, borders and territory still matter (Antonsich, 2009). Crucial is not just formal citizenship, but also belonging. For Yuval-Davis, such politics of belonging ‘are about the intersection of the sociology of power with the sociology of emotions, but it is the normative value lens which filters the meaning of both to individuals *and* collectivities’ (2011: 203, emphasis added). Thus, whether we may agree or not with the framing within a national identity, it is certainly a mistake to simply presume the debate settled.

On the more individual level of identity, Cante deplures what he sees as (borrowing from Sen), the ‘minuturization’ of people and their identities (2012: 21; 2016: 141). Beck puts this in even franker terms: ‘according to the multicultural premise, the individual does not exist. He is a mere epiphenomenon of his culture.’ (Beck, 2002: 37). Putting aside the rather obscure mischaracterization of multiculturalism, here then are two strands. The first is that collective identity normatively should no longer, and empirically can no longer be constructed around or within the nation-state. Secondly, that this is a result of the fact that in an era of globalization and super-diversity individual identities are too protean in character. Again, this is questionable on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Cante stresses the individuality and chosenness of identities and opines (demands?) that ‘what multiculturalists have to learn is that plural identities are not in conflict with one another’ (2015: 10). Nevertheless, there is a tension in Cante’s position as while he (rightly) stresses the non-conflictual aspect of plural identities, he seems to lay the



blame squarely at the feet of multiculturalism and minorities for being separate from the idea of the nation and somehow stubbornly resisting the reality of this plurality. This misses two things. The first is that studies show that minorities are more likely than white British citizens to positively identify with the national category 'British' (Jivraj, 2013; Nandi and Platt, 2015). The second is that multiculturalism as it exists in Britain has in fact been a far more bottom-up process of claims to a multicultural citizenship than top-down imposition. For many Muslims a religious identity has been central to this (Werbner, 2005, 2012), highlighting the significance of a politics of difference (Young, 1990). (It's interesting to note here that Modood's civic multiculturalism (2007, 2013) has also been criticized in part for being too based on empirical facts and not abstractly normative enough for political theory (see Laegaard, 2008, 2009; Modood, 2009a).) Therefore, telling people who have fought for political recognition on particular grounds of religion or ethnicity, in a context that has discriminated and excluded them on those grounds, that these are without empirical reality and should therefore be abandoned or reduced seems to miss the point. Nothing in this is suggestive as a matter of necessity that plurality of identity is inherently conflictual. It is rather to draw attention to the lived experience of identities in relations of power. There is nothing inherently in multiculturalism that denies multiple identities, far from it. Its concern is with the political and social salience of such identities in context and matters of equality directly relating to them.

The unfortunate effect of multiplying identities in the way Cantle advocates is that it is reductive of certain identities that certain people claim to be and experience as being overarching or fundamental. For many religious people, for example, their religious identity would be just such a fundamental part of their identity and irreducible to other categories (see, for example, DeHanas, 2016). The reduction of

identities into side-by-side categorical multiplicity and fluidity fails to recognize how culture, and also religion, is 'real' (Werbner, 2005). With this appreciation we can say that it is interculturalism that, by effectively taking an apolitical and ahistorical stance towards identity formation, does not reflect the lived reality of identities, despite claims to the contrary.

The problem is that interculturalism here over-emphasizes commonality such that it is not able to firstly recognize and secondly accommodate within its normative and conceptual framework *difference*. If, as Taylor (1994) has argued, a result of misrecognition is that 'a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion' (1994: 25), it remains unclear how this conception of the type of cosmopolitan identity posited by this form of interculturalism is able to do so. It, in fact, seems that the normative project of this kind of intercultural cosmopolitan identity reproduces in its very formulation this type of misrecognition. This is perhaps particularly so for a deeply held religious identity, which can never be drawn exclusively into cultural, sociological and political terms precisely because of its existential difference (see for example, Werbner 2012). Interculturalism has little to say about the religious and it is far from clear that it possesses the language to be able to accommodate such positions and epistemologies.

### *Interculturalism: a phantom menace*

As a result of this discussion, interculturalism cannot on theoretical grounds be considered a replacement for multiculturalism. This, nevertheless, is not necessarily to dismiss interculturalism *in toto*. In fact, while it cannot stand on its own, a complementarity rather than superiority can be argued for (Meer et al., 2016; Modood, 2014, 2015). In fact, it is noteworthy that research that is largely

sympathetic to the community cohesion approach, based on empirical studies of community cohesion policies related to young people, concludes similarly that this does not represent the death of multiculturalism but is rather coterminous (Thomas, 2011). This is, in addition to the discussion so far, not least because multiculturalism still lives on in policy, despite rhetoric to the contrary (Meer & Modood, 2009b; Modood, 2013; Heath and Demireva, 2013; Mathieu, 2017). Indeed, Meer and Modood (2014) have made this point in their own response to the ‘zombie category’ position.

There is a final but fundamental feature of how and why Cante proposes interculturalism as a superior replacement to multiculturalism, which also relates to the sections to follow. He proposes that an approach based on ‘contact theory’ can overcome the divides between communities and foster a shared sense of belonging and community cohesion. This is based on multiculturalism’s failure, as he sees it, to focus enough on dialogue. Yet work on contact theory is more complex and ambivalent than he suggests, a point expanded on in the section below. At heart here is the fact that Cante’s characterization of multiculturalism is at best a vague caricature he shares with mainstream media representations rather than a more sustained engagement with the literature. This has resulted in, for example, a rather bewildering misrepresentation of the foundational place of dialogue as a fact of ‘hasty revisionism’ (Cante, 2016: 133) in multiculturalism theories (see Kymlicka, 1995; Modood, 2007; Parekh 2006; Taylor, 1994; also Young, 1990). The place of dialogue in multiculturalism will be returned to more fully in the final section of this article. The following section moves on to discuss the ‘everyday’ literature and its relation to multiculturalism, and expands the discussion of ‘contact’ and ‘multiple identities’.

## **Multiculture: the ghost buster**

Everyday multiculturalism and super-diversity scholars are closer and often reference each other's work. 'Everyday multiculturalism' has been defined as 'a grounded approach to looking at the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter' (Wise and Velayutham, 2009: 3). The term 'super-diversity' was coined to register the need for a move away from a focus on ethnicity or national identity paradigms to take into account an increasingly diverse set of variables, for which super-diversity was to be a 'summary term' (Vertovec, 2007: 1025-1026, 2010, 2014). The focus of work on the everyday in superdiverse contexts is to look at how difference is used and negotiated by social actors in contact and interaction in everyday encounters in the social world as a way of 'reinstating the dynamic, complex nature of the concept of difference and its processual nature' (Semi et al., 2009: 69). The literature in this area is now broad and varied. However, in contrast to interculturalism models, which can and do conceptually oppose each other, there are a number of conceptual features that, notwithstanding minor differences, those researching 'everyday multiculturalism' share, and which are elaborated by its leading figures. They can, therefore, be seen as representing broad orientations within the literature. It is these that are identified and discussed here as they can be seen to relate to multiculturalism. This body of literature does not, unlike interculturalism, position itself as a normative replacement for multiculturalism; it is micro in its empirical approach and rarely deliberately and directly links to normative or policy concerns. Nevertheless, at a conceptual and empirical level, we can see a relation which would seem to question multiculturalism's orientation and theoretical positions. The following sections

evaluate those conceptual tools to suggest how they might be seen as challenging or perhaps complementary to multiculturalism.

In terms of its conceptualisation of and relation to multiculturalism, this is at times explicit and at times more implicit. Where it is explicit, the aim is to provide empirical substance, seen as lacking, to work on and understanding of the multicultural, alerting us to the ‘complex picture of inter-ethnic relations and solidarities’ (Hudson et al., 2009: 213). In contrast, multiculturalism has been characterised by leading authors in this field as ‘a top-down perspective’ and ‘dominated by macro-theoretical approaches’ (Wise and Velayutham, 2009: 2). As a result, it remains detached from the complex realities of everyday lives (ibid). In this way multiculturalism creates ‘unmoveable and unalterable’ reified differences which ‘necessarily come into conflict’ (Semi et al., 2009: 66-67; Noble, 2009a: 46). For some there is a disconnect, or even a ‘clash’ (Semi et al., 2009: 66-67), between macro-discourses and lived, quotidian experiences of multiculturalism, arguing for instance that young people live ‘in the shadows’ of theoretical and political debates (Butcher and Harris, 2010: 450; see also Berg and Sigona, 2013: 356). We thus find here also a position concomitant with Beck’s zombie. The characterization of multiculturalism’s normativity, seeing it as a top-down imposition, has already been challenged in the preceding sections and I will not repeat that here.

At other times, the relation to multiculturalism is more *implicit*, and lies in its shared concepts and empirical orientation. It is this implicit relation that the following sections discuss. Because only implicit there may in fact be an argument here for complementarity rather than challenge. Significantly, however, these follow similar lines of emphasis regarding identity and difference to interculturalism. The following

sections develop a critical reading of this literature focussing on its shared core concepts, and resultantly of the positions carved out as they relate to multiculturalism. It suggests that while there may be greater *potential* for complementarity, there are important reasons why this cannot be easily assumed.

### *Contact zones*

The first defining ideas are those of ‘the encounter’ mediated in ‘contact zones’ as part of the everyday practice of multiculturalism. ‘Contact zones’ that have been the focus of research in this area include shared public or semi-public spaces, examples being cafes, parks, food courts and markets. These studies aim to explore the everyday complex multicultural interrelations that take place between people in these spaces. They chart the ‘fluid and cross-cutting’ identities produced through encounter and against more unwieldy macro level discussions (Wise, 2009: 35). While views of identity and difference may then share certain assumptions with interculturalism, in contrast, this does not begin from the premise of ‘parallel lives’. Rather, it suggests that the contact Cattle is asking for is already taking place out-of-sight of political theory (see, for example, Neal et al., 2015). As such they are primarily focussed on researching what Stuart Hall called multicultural drift (Hall, 2000), in an effort ‘to illuminate larger or more general social processes’ and show the ‘*quieter ways*’ (Watson and Saha, 2013: 2020, 2025, italics in original) that people live together.

Followingly, there is a distinct and deliberate bias toward positive relations in the literature that sits in direct contrast to discourses which see diversity as a challenge (Wessendorf, 2014). As such, despite discourses of racism being present, Wessendorf states in relation to her study in Hackney: ‘the focus of this book lies on the everyday lived reality of diversity and not on racism’ (2014: 24). The challenge of

discourses of racism as part of lived reality, although given some discussion, is resultantly sidelined. Moreover, despite recognising that public funded institutions played a pivotal role in bringing people into contact, Wessendorf also sidelines them in favour of a position that people can and do just get on with it (ibid: 169). In fact Wise, a leading author in everyday multiculturalism literature, has more recently talked about needing ‘to take better account’ of such discourses as they coexist with positive interactions, having ‘bracketed’ these concerns (2015: 999)<sup>iv</sup>. This means, therefore, that diversity is something to be negotiated by individuals through developing skills and tactics. What is at issue here is not that people *do* develop and employ such tactics, but that this is not sufficient for addressing the dynamics of racism, discrimination and what is occurring in these spaces.

We can also see this bias in the definition of the ‘contact zone’. The concept of the ‘contact zone’ is defined as ‘the “space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations”’ (Wise, 2009: 22, quoting Pratt). Absent from the framing as it appears here, however, is the point Pratt was quite insistent on, that these take place ‘within radically asymmetrical relations of power’ (Pratt, 1992: 7; also 1991). The points raised here have effects for how patterns of racism and conflict are dealt with. While *mentioned* and *described*, they remain insufficiently critically engaged, often having the appearance of a caveat to the more sustained emphasis. There is the all too present risk that these approaches remain trapped to and limited by a ‘certain descriptive naivety’ (Valluvan, 2016: 2); and so contrary to some claims made for it, lack transgressive conceptual force. This itself undermines claims about enduring relations.

## *Civil inattention*

Alternatively, these ‘contact zones’ are identified as spaces which ‘may facilitate an equality of presence’ and where multiculturalism is ‘the unexceptional “is” of social relations’ (Neal et al., 2015: 464). A key characteristic of what constitutes multiculturalism here is akin to ‘civil inattention’, and the material conditions of these spaces conducive to it (see also Wilson, 2011). Similarly to Neal et al., Jones et al. (2015) argue that in some spaces (they focus on corporate spaces of leisure and consumption) ‘civil inattention is the most pronounced mode of social interaction’. As such, civil inattention is seen as an ethic which facilitates the practicalities of living together in urban spaces. In this case a non-political recognition of difference produces an everyday indifference to difference which enables people to live alongside one another.

Important, however, is how ‘contact’ in ‘contact zones’ is understood. Underlying it is an emphasis on geographical patterning and a conflation between ‘contact’ and ‘co-presence’. Civil inattention is in itself viewed as a positive recognition of other people’s right to privacy in public space. In this way, however, the definition of ‘contact zone’ remains locked into a hopeful potentiality. While indifference ‘*potentially* affords wider rights to and freedoms in the city’ (Tonkiss, 2005: 10, emphasis added), urban spaces and the people that move in them are not neutral. We are never ‘without a history’ (Schuetz, 1944) or in a position of ‘non-identity’ (Tonkiss, 2005: 23). This is because ‘public feelings of empathy or aversion towards the stranger... are shown to be instantiations of a slew of personal and collective labelling conventions –inherited, learnt, absorbed and practised – that flow into the moment of encounter’ (Amin, 2012: 5).



Indifference, as a result, can come with ‘overtones of concealed aversion’ (Simmel, 1997 [1903]: 15). As such, the street can be ‘a thicket of social codes and potentially risky contacts’ (Tonkiss, 2005: 71-72). While at times an ethic of indifference may hold as a form of inattention that allows people to ‘rub along’, this can be fragile (Husband in Husband et al., 2014). For along with everyday multiculturalism there exists everyday sexism, everyday racism and everyday Islamophobia. Significantly, however, is that here *everyday* signals not the banality of inattention and rubbing along, but the banality of discrimination precisely because of its inscription in social structures and institutions. It is not a freedom from them, but a binding into them. In important ways the city, and the nation, is gendered and ethnicized, both physically and as imagined. The freedom to it is consequently conditioned and ‘read’ differently by different people (Fenster, 2005: 204; Husband et al., 2014). The city's public and semi-public spaces are thus, 'not natural servants of multicultural engagement' (Amin, 2002: 967). The benefit of these approaches to the everyday is that they expose these modes of discrimination and offer a route to challenging them. This offers a more apparent complementary relation to multiculturalism. However, where this type of critical engagement is missing, owing to an alternative bias toward the positive and seemingly indifferent, there is an implicit but significant critique.

### *Contact and power*

Leading on from these conceptual issues, empirical evidence for this basis also demands it be scrutinized more carefully along these lines. ‘Contact theory’ has often returned different results precisely because ‘encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions and power’ (Valentine, 2008: 333). Valentine

further notes a disconnect between how positive local encounter may affect dispositions towards cultural others as individuals, but that this change will not necessarily extend to ideas of groups. Similarly, Murdock observes that ‘familiar in-group members tend to be classified trait-based (“who they are”) and for non-familiar out-group members category-based classification is applied’ (2016: 324). Thus while someone from the dominant cultural group may have a good personal, everyday relationship with black or Muslim colleagues or neighbours, for example, this does not automatically or necessarily preclude reifying and racist attitudes to unknown, imagined others. Moreover, work in social psychology has argued that even where intergroup contact improves the attitudes of those of the majority cultural group towards minorities, a concomitant attitude to support social policies that would directly produce social change leading to equality does not follow (Dovidio et al., 2007: 324). Similar points have been made by Amin (2012), who also questions the endurance of the ‘encounter’ and its scalability. It is precisely here, I suggest, that multiculturalism becomes important. While indifference as an urban ethic may be a minimum requirement, it falls significantly short of the type of enduring and ongoing relations that many advocates of contact theory would want to uphold, and even shorter of a stronger ethic.

Suggestions that inattention or a positive gloss toward more interaction as automatically a good thing are misplaced. As has been highlighted elsewhere in the everyday literature, the way bodies are sorted in interaction involves seeing processes from both above and below as ‘part of the texture of everyday interactions’ (Swanton, 2010: 2341-2343) and ‘as a product of the formatting of perceptions by past experience, by biopolitics, and micropolitical techniques that educate affects, habits, and disposition’ (Swanton, 2010: 2347). In order to be able to disrupt dominant

narratives and develop meaningful contact, everyday interaction research, where it does not do this, is unable to escape the problems it sets out to problematize. It subsequently is unable to adequately address complex aspects of individual and collective identities and remains, as interculturalism, hampered rather than freed by the multiple and fluid.

Significant is that despite intending to register the complexity in trajectories and identities, this literature too lacks an historical *longue durée* as part of its critical orientation. (Bhambra, 2016; Back, 2015). This is evident also in the rather simply put ‘historically separated’ assertion in the definition of the ‘contact zone’ above. This means it too often has too little to contribute to issues of power and discrimination, especially those that can be seen as structurally and normatively embedded (Bhambra, 2016). An individualized representation of diversity risks a depoliticized flattening of diversity and the descriptive naivety already alluded to. Super-diversity and everyday multiculturalism may be ‘particularly commensurate’ with the task of ‘seeing value in understanding social patterns rather than their casualties’ (Meissner, 2015: 558), and this is a valuable task no doubt. However, it errs in two ways. Firstly, when it confuses this with an antagonistic approach towards racism scholarship. Secondly, when by so doing, it points to the ‘shadows’ cast over people’s lives by, for example, multiculturalism rather than targeting racism and discrimination. Meissner (2015) is correct that it needn’t be antagonistic in this sense. This therefore questions the more explicit and reaching claims that super-diversity has usurped, or perhaps less aggressively simply replaced, the space vacated by multiculturalism (cf Berg and Sigona, 2013).

### *Sensorial contact*

A further aspect of everyday multiculturalism that remains limited through not problematizing these underlying principles is that which looks at zones of sensual contact. In this sense ‘sensuous multiculturalism’ refers to *affective co-presence* as constitutive of wider ranging change and affinity. The focus on a slow-burning affective development of a multicultural disposition is similarly problematic to the above, nevertheless. How, for example, food courts result in incremental changes in disposition and identity and the opening up of boundaries (Wise, 2011) remains stubbornly unclear. Likewise, it is difficult to see how ‘the integration of the market’s diverse smells and flavours into the everyday life of its users can also be seen to smudge the boundaries of the culture embodied by regular visitors’ (Rhys-Taylor, 2013: 399) as a result of the ‘sensuous labour’ (ibid: 401) necessarily undertaken by market traders to meet consumer demand for products. Or how, in reference to neighbours exchanging food products, ‘when Lakshmi eats one of Frank’s figs, or when he cooks some of her chillies, traces of the biography of these edible gifts are re-embodied in the recipient, in turn intermingling with their own sensual life-world’, resulting in reconfigured identities (Wise, 2009: 27). In short, it is entirely unclear how this is anything other than a ‘culinary cosmo-multiculturalism’ (Hage, 1997). This is so with regard to contradictory conclusions about affective responses when it comes to conviviality or tension and discord. The importance, for example, of ‘bodily habitus’ in feelings of (dis)comfort and (not)belonging as people interact in spaces with cultural others. The ‘failed encounters’ between Anglo-Celts and Chinese immigrants as a result of differing emotional ‘grammars’ and ‘geographies’ described by Wise (2010) hint at the limitations of contact and co-presence as sufficient for convivial multiculturalism and against a positive gloss. Wise notes, for instance, that

shopping mall food courts are “a *site par excellence* for encounters” (2011: 86) with considerably more ethnic mixing than in ‘ethnic neighbourhoods’ because of the ‘light[er] “fragrance”’ (ibid: 89) of ethnic difference in the food and the environment. This, however, rather suggests that the smelling and eating of the other remains limited to spaces of, rather than frees from, a consumerist multicultural.

Just as physical co-presence, sensorial co-presence remains insufficient in and of itself and insufficiently problematized and related to wider ranging factors. As such, many of the conclusions presented remain over-romanticized potentialities. This is a significant limitation and seems closer to a ‘soft cosmopolitanism’ (Calhoun, 2002) than a substantive multiculturalism. The ‘lightly fragranced banality’ of the food court, for example, is not consumed in a ‘non-place’ of equality of presence (Wise, 2011: 90; also Jones et al., 2015). The very light touch of it actually keeps the other, if not invisible, then contained within the tastes of a bland capitalist consumerism. The standardized context of corporate cafes and shopping malls as universalized open public spaces<sup>v</sup> masks the fact that their cosmopolitanism is one which is depoliticized and uniformizing in form. Moreover, that it is reproductive of a dominant marketization of shallowly and narrowly appropriated cultural consumption rather than one which challenges homogenizing and exclusionary tendencies. Rather than complicating or putting at risk the culture that appropriates them, it renders them into compatible form (Mehta, 2000: 630). It is difficult thus to see how such cosmopolitan readings meet the ethical challenge of the multicultural.

Parker’s study of interactions in Chinese takeaways (Parker, 2000) highlights some of these issues well. He shows how racism and orientalism are reproduced as the other is consumed by the culturally dominant in this ‘contact

zone'. Parker distinguishes between the 'foodscape' and 'ethnoscape', arguing that the first causally affects the other. As such he draws on Avtar Brah's 'diaspora space' to conceive of the relational processes between the two. Brah understands diaspora space as a space in which '*the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native*' (Brah, 1996: 208-209, italics in original), thus transgressing the traditional power balance of majority-minority. Nevertheless, the crucial first half of this understanding, on which the distinguishing importance of Brah's concept lies, is omitted in Parker's quoting of her. Thus, while the distinction between foodscape and ethnoscape may be analytically useful, it does not in fact uphold the causal relationship being looked for. The very quality, or actual lack of it, of the interaction in the takeaway as a contact zone belies this as the Chinese takeaway remains a zone in which orientalist perceptions are played out. The changes in the ethnoscape remain restricted to demographic presence of people in areas where these restaurants do business, i.e. the changing foodscape, rather than substantive changes to the ethnoscape in terms of self-understanding and belonging.

### *Contact, whose contact?*

Following the discussion so far it remains unclear if and how practice and 'coming into contact' causally and consequently 'establish ongoing relations'. The definition of contact zone masks rather than elucidates complexities in relation to the sociocultural context. Amin argues that co-presence and collaboration are very different things and that it is the frames and terms of encounter that demand attention rather than the encounter itself (Amin, 2012). This alerts us to the fact that everyday multiculturalism is unevenly distributed and remains trapped as a matter of potential (Ho, 2011). We can note here that Allport, foundational for contact theory and whom

Cantle also draws on heavily, remarked that prejudice would be reduced through contact, but that such contact was qualified as '*equal status* contact' (1982 [1954]: 281, emphasis added), and identified parameters for contact that were ideal typical rather than actually existing. Likewise, there is the need for considerable investment in cultivating positive and fruitful contact (Thomas, 2007; Wilson, 2013).

Questions therefore persist about who comes or does not come into contact with whom, where this happens and where it does not happen, what kind of contact is taking place, and how this may or may not be constitutive of social transformations and identity. I do not wish to contest their positive valuation but rather point to the fact that the contact and encounters often remain insufficiently conceptualized and problematized in relation to the claims made for them with regard to enabling better understanding, producing ongoing relations across difference and concomitant changes in identity. Identity itself is not a socially neutral concept and to important extents is structured by forces and relations in wider society (May and Sleeter, 2010: 5-6; Karlsen and Nazroo, 2015). It is not at all clear how or why civil inattention or an ethics of indifference would result in ongoing relations or durability of connections, unless by ongoing we mean an absence of negative relations, but even this, as we have seen, is contested. Thus premised, the categories on which people and groups are understood remains stuck in the very categories they seek to disrupt.

What this discussion of the contact zone signals is that spatial difference (as geographical separation) and social distance (as cultural separation) cannot be folded into one another straightforwardly. If social identities and socio-cultural differences are reinforced through continuity and repetition (Wilson, 2013: 635), there is no reason why civil inattention will necessarily overcome cultural separatism or

discrimination. Thus both an emphasis on shared commonality and indifference miss the mark. Therefore, while ‘a failure to move critiques of multiculturalism on from nationally framed... and abstract models of identity and belonging’ may remain at risk of being ignorant of the challenges, complexities and possibilities highlighted by the everyday (Clayton, 2009: 482), an equal failure is a danger if such accounts do not in turn speak to nationally framed models in which they are situated. They thus fail to take a relational approach and see how multicultural policies themselves may in fact be transformative of those identities (Uberoi, 2008). From this perspective, the shadows seem miscast and less dark.

### *Multiculture or multiculturalism*

The conceptual shortcomings and orientation discussed above can be further seen in how they relate to key concepts commonly employed, namely Hall’s multicultural drift and Gilroy’s conviviality.

An initial important distinction is one Hall (2000) makes between multicultural, as a description of social characteristics, and multiculturalism as a substantive term. Multicultural drift alone is not enough, at most it is something ‘to be getting on with’ - a multiculturalism is also necessary to address structural factors (Hall, 1999). While researching multicultural drift may represent an incremental, slow, passive revolution, ‘something more serious, and more wide ranging and far reaching, than that’ should be worked for also (Hall and Back, 2009: 680). Investigating drift is of course a strength of everyday multicultural work, but it is not multiculturalism, nor a critique of multiculturalism solely on this basis.



In reference to Gilroy's work, the focus on the convivial does offer a welcome balance to segregation narratives by challenging them as both empirically and theoretically inadequate, and reorienting away from cultural clash and withdrawal and towards what we might call a multicultural competence (Neal et al., 2013). However, by focussing on conviviality and civil inattention, tensions and discord, and their socio-cultural and historical circumstances, are side-lined and the picture consequently distorted. For Gilroy the hope (2004, 166) and 'radical openness' of conviviality rests in being able to be grapple with history, here colonial history, and its vestigial presence of melancholia. Its character is thus imbibed in personal-psychic and institutional-structural forms. Conviviality is not restricted to a descriptive term that rests on the status quo, but requires action and expurgation of the 'pathological character' of post-imperial melancholia (Gilroy, 2004: 98). While this imbalance has in places been recognised, it remains under-conceptualised as part of a critical framework of investigation.

An emphasis on conviviality and contact is welcome in that it addresses popular media and political caricatured characterizations of multiculturalism, including those by interculturalism. Nevertheless, for the conceptual and theoretical reasons outlined above, the literatures discussed here have, by relying on the dominant categorical frames they seek to disrupt and 'contact', failed to disturb these categories in relation to multiculturalism. Where the literature has been able to show the tensions and fragility as well as seemingly unproblematic indifference it can be understood as a complement to multiculturalism, and could usefully engage with it. As already mentioned, multiculturalism is in this way a double process, neither just top-down or bottom-up (Friedman, 1997/2015). Where it ignores the former and

positions itself directly and explicitly in contestation with multiculturalism, it misplaces its line of critique.

### **Towards a conclusion: what is missing**

There is a slight tension between the two main sections of discussion so far, and it is now time to resolve this, and by doing so help clarify by way of summary my overall position. The tension rests on my critique of contact. On the one hand, I have been critical of interculturalism's emphasis on policy interventions fostering it. On the other, of accepting the everyday's criticism of the position of interculturalism, whilst also critiquing the position this is done from itself. Important, however, and consistent across the critique is that these formulations avoid issues of power and discrimination as well as reducing individuals to mere individuals and their skills at encounter.

There is nothing wrong with contact *per se*, it would be patently absurd to be *against* contact, and this is resolutely not my position. Rather, what is at issue here is what problems this contact is supposed to resolve and in what ways. Both accounts are inadequate in conceptualising identities and the spaces in which they are formed, and thus through their conceptions of contact do not sufficiently situate these identities in social relations. A move away from the privileging of groups and categories can be made as they are at the same time interrogated and given salience. Relations between 'subject' positions, those they take up as their own, and 'object' positions, those they are put into, need to be brought out. It is, for example, a central position of Modood's multiculturalism that positive identity-making and assertiveness, held and led by minorities themselves, can challenge inferiorised negative minority identities (2007: 37-43). In this way difference is negotiated and re-imagined by 'not the erasure [or flattening] of difference but its transformation into

something for which civic respect can be won' (ibid: 41). It is perhaps this that will allow the emergence of the complex relations that include a transruptive (Hesse, 2000; Hall, 2000) potential of centre-margin and more thorough consideration of how religion, ethnicity and culture, and their conflation, relate and can better elucidate aspects of the multicultural question.

### **The zombie reanimation**

I began this article noting Beck's zombie category argument, which I related to approaches that have challenged multiculturalism's continuing relevance and assessed these approaches against this term. One of the most significant shortcomings of these approaches I have argued is the limiting effect for a sense of the 'realness' of aspects of identity that they seek to 'go beyond'. To conclude this article I briefly describe a more recent challenge to multiculturalism made by Shannahan (2017), who also casts multiculturalism as a zombie category, albeit more sympathetically as he also directly criticises interculturalism. This is not, however, because his arguments *do* suggest that multiculturalism is indeed a zombie, but rather because I believe that these will help clarify and bolster the position I have been arguing in contrast to interculturalism and everyday multiculturalism. Consideration of this can help elucidate further some of the arguments made so far, as well as help move towards the complementarity that has been hinted at.

Shannahan's approach is, as everyday multiculturalism, rooted in the quotidian in order to 'humanise arid debates about multiculturalism, placing people at the centre rather than policy agendas' (ibid: 13). It does so, however, from the position of pairing sociological approaches with urban theology (see also Shannahan, 2010), thus specifically relating to religious identity. It therefore represents a very

different approach to identity and difference from interculturalism and everyday multiculturalism.

Significantly, this approach reconceives multiculturalism as a theological principle ‘which reflects the character of a God who rejoices in difference’ (ibid: 43). Along these lines Shannahan argues for engagement with political theology as a move towards a ‘hermeneutics of liberative difference’ to ‘rescue diversity from the hegemony of assimilationist community cohesion narratives’ (Shannahan, 2017: 18). Drawing on the political theology of three thinkers, Shannahan develops his hermeneutic of liberative difference to problematize the way difference is understood and handled but without the presumption that difference is itself a problem to be solved. He thus argues for recognition of multiple epistemologies rather than a flattening of multiple identities. Through the analogy of the dub practice of Jamaican dancehall musicians (in which he has been heavily influenced by James Beckford), Shannahan both preserves the theological root while opening conceptual space for the dynamic, complex and processual character of modern identities and practices in contemporary society. This appreciation of difference proceeds dialogically based on a ‘risky hospitality’, in turn based on blurred boundaries of mutuality to subvert insider/outsider binaries. This, notably, is rooted in social justice; indeed his urban theology is quite explicitly a ‘bias to the oppressed’ (2010: 224) to ‘empower marginalized urban communities’ (ibid: 85). Moreover, however, alongside a recognition of multiplicity, we also need to hold a ‘re-imagined catholicity that holds together our commonality and uniqueness’ (2017: 15).

I am in closer agreement with Shannahan’s underlying normative position towards difference<sup>vi</sup>. This is because difference, rather than the problem to be solved,

is the source from which liberative potential can and should develop. Furthermore, I welcome his theological intervention as an important one, and an integral part of a wider project to reanimate what may have reasonably come to resemble a zombie conversation. I am, nonetheless, less convinced that his intervention shows any better that multiculturalism is necessarily a zombie category. This is so for two primary reasons. The first is certain reservations about taking Shannahan's approach too generally. That is, despite foregrounding the *religious* in relation to the cultural, to do so potentially risks a misrecognition of its own if its result was to, for instance, reify and flatten the identity *Muslim* in this way. Furthermore, the biblical foundations of Shannahan's conceptual and theoretical work, his characterizations of God and interpretations of Jesus' ministry, would need to be brought into a broader hermeneutical framework if the goal of 'forg[ing] a new model of intercultural and inter-faith liberative praxis' (Shannahan, 2010: 45) is to be realized. This is to say that Shannahan's intervention is an important part of the puzzle but not the puzzle itself.

Additionally, is that the type of dialogical hermeneutics he is asking for is already present in multiculturalism and may be better placed as a framework to develop not just inter-faith, and intra-faith, dialogue, but also dialogue between faith and non-faith partners. We can find this in Taylor's (1994) seminal essay where he draws on the Gadamerian concept of horizons. It is in fact this aspect that forms the dialogical basis of Taylor's formulation of recognition. It is through an understanding of what is meant by horizons and *the fusion of horizons* that this dialogical basis gains its depth. By deeply dialogical I mean that it both recognizes 'value pluralism' (see Meer et al., 2016, citing Isaiah Berlin) and accounts for the political context and power relations (ibid; also Young, 1990). This means recognising 'being-value' (Gadamer, 2013 [1960]: 246) and investigating this situated in social and political

relations.. Our horizons are our ‘range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point’ (ibid: 313). Underlying horizons are prejudices. It is important to realize here that prejudice for Gadamer can have either a positive or negative value. It is in this way that Gadamer rescues prejudice from the presumption of neutrality and negative inflection it was given in the Enlightenment. More generally prejudices are the fore-meanings of how ‘we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live’ (ibid: 289). These are brought to the tasks of interpreting and understanding before other elements that may affect those tasks have been examined. This is an important part of the dialogue, and cornerstone of a multicultural dialogical approach as it recognizes the identity-richness of the dialogue partners and the context in which they are working. Crucially, understanding and accounting for these prejudices has the goal of opening us up rather than close us off to understanding; that ‘the solution is *genuinely open*’ and constructive of relations (Modood, 2017: 86, emphasis added) – this is its dialogical character.

## **Conclusion**

In this article I have argued that the resources critics of multiculturalism offer come up short. For interculturalism, which explicitly positions itself as a replacement for multiculturalism theoretically, normatively and as a policy orientation, this is so for two reasons. Firstly, the premises on which it critiques multiculturalism are both unsubstantiated by empirical evidence and aimed at a caricature of multiculturalism rather than based in engagement with those models and theories. Secondly, it remains substantively inadequate to that task as the conceptual and critical tools it elaborates

fall short of claims made for them and offer little in how to address the questions and challenges that multiculturalism grapples with.

For everyday multiculturalism, while it (mostly) does not position itself as a replacement for multiculturalism, it does either explicitly or implicitly read against it. Similarly to the second reason above in relation to interculturalism, it too lacks the conceptual and critical resources of both identities and space in relations of power, inequality and discrimination. Indeed, in many instances they seem to actively avoid it. There is an argument that they can offer the potential for complementarity (Watson, 2009; Ho, 2011 might be read as an example of moving toward this). It is complementarity that may offer fruitful avenues for further investigation. However, this remains considerably under developed. Indeed, it remains unclear on what grounds this could be developed. This is in fact at the root of the ways in which everyday multiculturalism is at least an implicit critique of multiculturalism. If complementarity cannot on these grounds be assumed, then it must be worked for. Shannahan's work, by reorienting difference away from being a problem and avoiding a flattening of identities and power relations in spaces, is suggestive of how we may perhaps approach serious work in this direction. Consideration of this also suggests, however, that multiculturalism remains a serious framework offering significant conceptual and critical resources for these conversations.

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<sup>i</sup> There are other names for the concept that, notwithstanding minor differences, follow a similar notion. It may also be rendered as ‘commonplace diversity’ (Wessendorf, 2013) or ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ (Noble, 2009a), for example.

<sup>ii</sup> As an explicit theoretical challenge there has been rather more, and ongoing, direct engagement between multiculturalists and interculturalists in different contexts. For example, in the form of debate articles (see Cantle, 2015 and Modood, 2015) and an edited book (see Meer, Modood & Zapata-Barrero, 2016).

<sup>iii</sup> Ted Cantle, for example, regards Bouchard’s conception of interculturalism in the context of Canada as ‘a progressive variant of multiculturalism’ (2012: 141), rather than as interculturalism proper. He is thus similarly critical of this interculturalism as he is multiculturalism.

<sup>iv</sup> In her more recent work Wise (Wise and Noble, 2016) has more recently sought to expand the conceptualisation of ‘conviviality’ to better reflect this (see also Neal et al., 2013). It still, nevertheless, remains insufficient in regards to the discussion presented here.

<sup>v</sup> They are also, of course, privately owned spaces with a circumscribed ‘publicness’.

<sup>vi</sup> Indeed, many of the positions argued in this article stem from a current research project focussing on British converts to Islam.